



# The South India CHURCHMAN

The Magazine of the Church of South India

PROCESSED

FEB 0 1994 JULY 1994

GTU LIBRARY





	Page
Social Reform and Development .. .. .	1
Recent writing on Dalit Theology A Bibliographical Essay .. .. .	2
South Asia Youth in Mission Workcamp Weaving A New Community of Hope Background Paper for Reflection .. .. .	5
The Maniakaranpatti Experience The South Asia Youth Camp .. .. .	9
Mission in Pluralistic Society .. .. .	10
News from the Dioceses .. .. .	12
Christians must co-exist with other religions, Chinese told .. .. .	15

*Opinions expressed by contributors do not commit the C.S.I.*

## The South India CHURCHMAN

*The Magazine of the Church of South India*

**JULY 1994**

### EDITOR

REV. P. C. DASS BABU

MIGN DEEP APARTMENTS

MAYURI MARG

BEGUMPET

HYDRABAD-500 016. (A.P.) PHONE: 847436

### HON. BUSINESS MANAGER

PROF. GEORGE KOSHY, General Secretary

Synod C.S.I. Centre

5, WHITES ROAD

ROYAPETTAH, MADRAS-600 014

Phone : 8521566

All remittances and communications regarding subscriptions and advertisements to be sent to the Hon. Business Manager.

### HON. AGENT IN U.K.

Rev. J. L. Thomas, Bronheulwen Chapel Lawn Road

Bachmell, Shropshire SY 7 0AH, UK

Tel. No. 05 474 675

### RATES OF SUBSCRIPTION PER ANNUM

Subscription in India .. .. .	Rs. 35.00
Single Copy .. .. .	Rs. 4.00

### SUBSCRIPTION OVERSEAS

	Sea Mail	Air Mail
U. S. A. .. .. .	\$ 10.00	\$ 15.00
U. K. .. .. .	£ 5.00	£ 10.00
Australia .. .. .	\$ 10.00	\$ 20.00
New Zealand .. .. .	\$ 10.00	\$ 20.00

## 25 Years Ago!

The christian cannot separate social or educational medical work from directly evangelistic work missionaries cannot evangelise but remain only 'humanitarians' or as 'Philanthropists', their philanthropic or humanitarian activities themselves must soon come an end and one does not require much imagination visualise the immense loss that would thus accrue to India. Besides, it would seem a curious sort of unrealism to be ready to accept social, educational and healing ministrations from the Christian Missionary but to refuse the one price of great price which he has to offer. To the Christian such undue importance given to social educational and medical activities is unthinkable but mission of Church has a new dimension to look at now

— Churchman, 1969

### ADVERTISEMENT TARIFF

Last Page (4th page of the cover)	Rs. 12,000 p.m.
Full Page	Rs. 750 per insertion
Half Page	Rs. 400 "
Quarter Page	Rs. 200 "
Minimum	Rs. 150 "

Hony. Business Manager



# Social Reform and Development



To feed the hungry, to succour the needy, to comfort the lonely and to aid the handicapped has always found a sympathetic echo in the human heart. Christianity extols love, charity, compassion, alleviation of human suffering as virtues to be practised by the faithful. On this bulwark rests the noble pioneering work of the Church in the rehabilitation of the vulnerable sections of Society. The Church also engaged itself in correcting injustices perpetrated on a section of society by social reforms. This in itself is a part of development—perhaps the back-ground of development. Today when we think about development, we must realise that the social reform and development are the two sides of the same coin. In a pluralistic society like ours, without the social reform we cannot successfully carry on the development activities. While social reforms seeks to alter basic values, attitudes and practices, development provides a framework for a wide variety of activities in aid of communities who are unable to find for themselves.

Removal of poverty is one of the foremost objectives of all the agencies, both the Government and the private agencies which are involved in developmental activities. When the first five-year plan (1951-1956) was introduced by the Government, it paid rich dividends. In terms of achievement it was by far the most successful plan this country has ever had. The Country exceeded the target for food production or attained nearly all the targets set for other areas of economy. The second, Third and successive Plans have been based on three broad premises: land reforms and agricultural productivity; heavy industrial sector; and to impose austerity on the people and self-restraint on itself to generate the maximum of investible resources and make sure that it is not frittered away in non-developmental spending. The immediate reasons for down-turn in the activity are the inflation unleashed by successive droughts, and the growth of population. The rate of growth of population turned out to be very nearly double of what the planners had anticipated. The benefits, therefore, in consequence, were correspondingly less and took longer time in coming.

Family planning is a delicate subject but it is a must for the survival of the country. The success of the family planning programme will depend upon the creation of a social climate in which the need is felt by individual families and groups of people. This social climate can be

created by the religious heads but not by the official fiat. Unless the programme has religious sanctions it would be futile to tackle this problem which is a major obstacle in the way of almost all the developmental projects. Leaving it to the decision of individuals is nothing but escapism. Whether it is Hindu, Muslim or Christian, the religious leaders should be concerned of the dire consequences of the population explosion and convince the people.

The other area where we need to be vigilant is the non-plan expenditure, which is increasing by leaps and bounds. Some of the projects are like inverted Pyramids—top heavy! In almost all the States it is estimated that half the Government's income is being spent on administration. Certainly we cannot dispense with administration but it should not be conceived disproportionately. The Church and particularly the other private Christian organisations which are receiving huge grants should guard against this, lest the whole ministry is misunderstood by the those who closely watch us.

Unfortunately the fruits of development do not reach most of the backward areas and the poorest of the poor. Today if we think of any project the picture we get is a cement structure, a fleet of vehicles and an unending trips to a strip of villages. Such distorting image fails us to understand whether the projects are intended for the development of the poor people in villages or a few individuals and offices. Lack of clarity about the objectives and lack of coordination among the various implementing agencies are the main reasons for the failure. People are more important and top-priority should be given to the projects which aim to develop the people. In the name, and under the pretext of doing justice to the common man, certain projects have come to stay in such a way that they only complete the stranglehold of bureaucracy on the daily existence of the common man. One has to be careful about this ominous development which will lead to disastrous consequences. Programmes should be people oriented.

The Church has the missionary zeal; committed personnel and it can add a spiritual dimension to the development programmes, therefore, the Church has much to offer to nation building.

—DASS BABU.



# Recent writing on Dalit Theology

## A Bibliographical Essay

REV. JOHN PARRATT\*

Towards the end of 1986 over a hundred Indian Christians met in Madras under the auspices of the Dalit Liberation Movement and the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society to consider the relevance of Christian theology to the situation of the dalits. Several factors had led to this concern for the emergence of a specifically dalit theology. One was the increasing reconversion of dalits to hinduism, caused partly in reaction to the paradoxical situation within the Indian Church as a whole where dalits had consistently not been accorded their rightful place, and partly as a result of government policies that restricted opportunities and benefits to dalits who were formally Hindus. Another factor was the intensification of violence and atrocities against dalits by caste Hindus, which brought about a greater sense of solidarity and willingness to challenge the *status quo*. The rise of the Dalit Panther Movement in the 1970s was perhaps the most important example of this kind of active protest. The publication of the papers delivered at the Madras conference under the editorship of M.E. Prabhakar (*Towards a Dalit Theology*, ISPCK for CISRS, Delhi 1988) marked the beginning of serious theologizing by dalit Christians and the effective emergence of a uniquely Indian 'second generation liberation theology'. Such was its impact that book was immediately reprinted.

Two other symposia followed, one focussing on the Kerala situation (*The Dalit Desiyata*, edited by Abraham Ayoorkuzhiel, ISPCK for CISRS, Delhi 1990), the other resulting from ecumenical discussions between the Jesuit Theological Seminary in Madras and the Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary at Maudrai (*Emerging Dalit Theology*, edited by Xavier Irudayaraj, 1990). The Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute, Madras, became the first Indian seminary to establish a distinct department of dalit theology, and subsequently made available the proceedings of its national seminars on dalit issues held there in 1989 (*Towards a Common Dalit Ideology*, edited by A.P. Nirmal, Madras, n.d.) and in Ooty in 1992 (*Dalits and Women, Quest for humanity*).

It has also, again under the editorship of Nirmal, produced an invaluable source book, *A Reader in Dalit Theology* (Madras, n.d.), which brings together a judicious selection of previously published papers on dalit theology.

There is thus burgeoning literature appearing in India on this peculiarly Indian theology of the oppressed. Regrettably, distribution of Indian Christian books in the west is at best erratic. This is a pity, for it means that western theologians are only scantily informed about one of the most exciting and important development in third world theology for several years. Publishers of Indian Christian books have proceeded on the assumption that their task is to produce material that primarily serves the needs of the church and at prices that Christian readers can reasonably afford (and this is no doubt a lesson that theological publishers in the west should take more note of if they are not to become irrelevant to all but a few well-heeled intellectuals!). This principle well suits dalit theology, which is explicitly the theologizing of ordinary believers at the grassroots, and which manifests itself in hymn, song and story, as well as in the more sustained argumentation of trained theologians. It is appropriate then that several of the volumes discussed in this review include some moving examples of such oral-narrative theology.

### Who are the dalits?

The contributors to Prabhakar's book have provided us with the basic — and shocking — context of the dalit experience. 'Dalit' derives from a Sanskrit word (significantly also similar to the Hebrew, *dal*, which has an almost identical meaning) that may be translated as 'broken, downtrodden.' It is the self-designation of those who are outside of the four Hindu castes, called in the Indian constitution 'Scheduled Castes,' by Gandhi *harijans*, and also popularly known as *avarna* or outcasts. In all they make up about twenty per cent of the population of India; nine out of ten live in the villages, and over half exist below the poverty line. This economic and social deprivation is the direct result of their non-caste status. As Sundar Clarke in his paper 'The Search for a Dalit Theology' points out, it is part of Hindu *dharma* to exclude dalits from religion as 'non-humans,' and it is this which

\* JOHN PARRATT taught and researched in Africa, India and the Pacific; formerly professor of Theology and Religion at the Universities of Malawi and Botswana; currently associate director of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World, University of Edinburgh, Scotland.



has been largely responsible for their dehumanization. Nearly sixty per cent of dalits are barred from using village wells, over seventy per cent are denied access to Hindu temples. Despite the democratic constitution of India the dalits, partly because of their very low literacy rate, have little political influence, and the legislation that was meant for their benefit has lamentably failed to protect them from gross exploitation. Action to claim their legal rights inevitably leads to harassment by the police and to abuse and violence at the hands of the upper castes. Dalits are thus caught in a trap of powerlessness and dehumanization.

The church's record on dalit rights has been, on the whole, miserable. While dalits represent only around 2.5 per cent of the total Indian population, some 70 per cent of Indian Christians are of dalit origin (in some areas, such as the Punjab, it is nearer 90 per cent). However, until quite recently, they have been little represented within the hierarchy of the churches, and have suffered from various forms of discrimination at the hands of caste Christians. Thus (as the contributions of Gladstone, Azariah and others to *Towards a Dalit Theology* show) Christian dalits agonize over a double oppression — within the church as well as in society as a whole. Furthermore, Indian Christian theology in the past generally has been concerned with attempting to relate the Christian faith to the Hindu context of India, and its approach (in Nirmal's words) of 'primarily responding to philosophical and theological conceptions of brahmanical religion and culture has not helped dalit aspirations.' Dalit theology, by contrast, is a clarion call for Indian Christian thinking to come out of what James Massey calls 'its Sanskritic captivity,' and to open its eyes to those things that for too long it has ignored, 'the poverty, injustice, illiteracy, oppression and denial of identity which for the majority of Christians, and for most other Indians, are questions of survival.' Dalit theology is therefore an alternative option, which seeks to conscientize and raise the self-image of those who have been conditioned historically and socially to think of themselves as inferior, and whose fate it is to suffer exploitation.

As part of this process of a 'change of mind,' dalit writers seek to reinterpret Indian history from the perspective of the oppressed. Ayrookuzhiel reflects this approach in his chapter entitled 'Dalit Theology: A Movement of Counter-culture.' His argument is that dalits, along with the 'Scheduled Tribes' (i.e., the so-called 'tribals') are the true autochthonous peoples of India, who were violently displaced and subsequently incorporated as a slave population by the Vedic Aryans. This subjugation, he argues, subsequently received theological justification during the brahmanical period, and is now codified in the classical Hindu scriptures. A first task for dalits, therefore, is to recover the hidden 'alternative tradition,' which may still be found in the oral literature of the dalits themselves.

This anti-brahmanical counter culture was never completely eradicated, and indeed has manifested itself from time to time in protest movements in Indian history, of which those of the Buddha, Kabir, Nanak and most recently Ambedkar, are the most striking examples. Dalitness, therefore, involves a recovery and exposure of a suppressed past, a philosophy of 'the land is ours' over against the later Aryan conquerors. But while dalit theology, as a theology of protest, has a deep political and social underpinning, it has a markedly different approach to social analysis from Latin American theology of liberation. Its essential focus is caste, rather than class, and in it therefore 'the liberation motif is authentically Indian' (Nirmal).

This new way of doing theology challenges the dominant Sanskritic tradition of Indian Christian thinking to take account of the real problems of the two thirds of Indian Christians, which are social and economic as much as spiritual. It aims at conscientization, 'to build up identity' (Ayrookuzhiel) and to change the mentality as well as the unjust structures of society. Its social context, however, is not exclusive since (in Sundar Clarke's words) 'it goes beyond the frontiers of Christianity,' for both Christian and non-Christian dalits share a common oppression and a common longing. It is a people's theology from below, 'a people's self-affirmation of doing their own theology from their own situation' (Prabhakar).

Part two of *Towards a Dalit Theology* therefore fittingly includes several "reflections and testimonies," which provide grassroots Christian reactions to the situation in which dalits find themselves. As one might expect, a christology of a suffering liberator is integral, and this is a theme that is developed both by Clarke and Prabhakar himself.

### Dalit Christians: their history

As we have noted, the recovery of the dalit past is regarded as an essential prerequisite to understanding the present dalit predicament and thus to formulating a dalit theology. John Webster has attempted to fill this gap in his *The Dalit Christians: a History* (ISPCK Delhi, 1992). Having its origins in Webster's lectures on 'Christianity and the Depressed Classes,' delivered during his time at the United Theological College, Bangalore, his book is not only a valuable corrective to more traditional approaches to the dalit past, but it is also a scholarly affirmation that the dalits have a real history that is as much a part of the Indian Christian story as that of the dominant castes. Webster is therefore seeking to interpret Indian church history from the underside, from the perspective of the oppressed themselves. To do this he sets the story of dalits firmly within the two-fold context of the history of the dalits in general and of the development of Christianity in India.



After a (perhaps over-brief) note on the probable origins of caste Webster considers the evidence, largely from European sources, which indicates an emerging dalit consciousness during the last century. Here, as elsewhere in his narrative, he makes judicious use of case studies.

The bulk of the work then argues that there were three important stages in the history of the dalit movement. The first was the period of mass conversions. While one motive behind these was certainly the enhanced social and educational status and self-dignity that Christianity brought, Webster rightly notes that conversion not infrequently involved economic and physical hardship. Furthermore, the role of charismatic Indian Christian leaders should not be underestimated. The main result of such mass of movements was naturally demographic, laying the foundation for the situation today in which seventy to seventy-five per cent of Indians are of dalit origin.

Webster's second stage, covering the 1920s and 1930s, saw politics replacing evangelism. This period saw dalit Christians being divided from their non-Christian fellows, in that they were constitutionally regarded not as 'scheduled castes' but as 'Christians,' and thus they were excluded from the special legislative provisions intended for non-caste people. The circular reasoning behind this position — that since Christianity does not (at least officially) acknowledge caste, there can therefore be no such person, as a Christian outcaste — is an issue that is still very much with us today. Though some gains were made, the dominance of Gandhi in Indian politics of independence ensured that dalits were not accorded proper political representation. For all his public concern for the *harijans*, as he called them, Gandhi vehemently opposed the recognition of dalits as a separate community, believing as he did that this would only serve to perpetuate untouchability. The fact that caste distinctions are as blatant as ever in most parts

of Indian today, and that further positive measures have been necessary to try to ensure (however unsuccessfully) more equal opportunities for dalits, is surely a demonstration of how spurious Gandhi's argument really was. How little the voice of the oppressed castes have counted in the writing of Indian history is shown in that while Gandhi has been almost deified in the popular consciousness, the reputation of his no less great dalit contemporary, Ambedkar, has even now scarcely been properly evaluated. Webster documents this troubled period in Indian nationalism, in so far as it affected the dalits, with care and precision.

His third stage of dalit history brings us up to date, and shows how the era of 'compensatory discrimination' in favour of dalits has further alienated Christian dalits from their non-Christian brothers and sisters because of the legal sophism that 'you can only be an outcaste if you are a Hindu (or, subsequently, a Buddhist) since there is no caste in Christianity.' More recent developments have shown, however, that Christian and non-Christian dalits are now making common cause in the face of an oppression that affects them all, and that tribal peoples too, who are in many areas equally subject to marginalization and exploitation by ruling elites, are joining in the protest.

A useful complement to Webster's book is James Massey's brief *Roots: A Concise History of Dalits* (ISPCK for CISRS, Delhi 1991). Massey, a leading dalit theologian from the Punjab, bases his argument for the antiquity of the dalits in India on an examination of archeological evidence and on the Rig Veda. He concludes that the dalits are the descendants of the pre-Aryan indigenes. His book is especially informative on recent developments affecting dalits and on the constitutional issues involved.

(To be continued).

## CCA Vacancies

The Christian Conference of Asia has announced two staff vacancies

1. Executive Secretary for Theological concerns.
2. Executive Secretary for youth.

Job descriptions for the posts are available at the CSI Synod Office.

Applications may be sent to :

The General Secretary,  
Christian Conference of Asia, Pak Tin Village,  
Mei Tin Road. SHANTIN N.T., HONG KONG.



# South Asia Youth in Mission Workcamp

## Weaving A New Community of Hope

### Background Paper for Reflection

DR. J. RICHARD DEVADOSS, *Madras*

#### Introduction

The theme *Weaving a New Community of Hope*, chosen for the South Asia Youth in Mission Workcamp, is most appropriate in the present day context of gloom, hopelessness and growing injustices.

Thematic reflections are crucial, especially for youth (chronologically and in spirit) for it is they, who are synonymous with vigour, rationality, new ways of thinking and acting, who can really be committed to weaving themselves together, as well as facilitate weaving of others to create a new world order of humaneness, peace, justice and hope.

#### The concept of weaving

Weaving, according to the Webster's New World Dictionary, is interlacing threads or yarns to form fabrics. And fabrics mean anything made of parts put together or simply the basic structure of anything. The threads or yarns have necessarily to go through a process of preparation — threading, dyeing, patterning, warping — without which weaving can never be done.

*In short, weaving is the preparation and meshing of individual strands to create a new pattern, while at the same time, the uniqueness of individuality is retained.*

Weaving signifies coming together to form a new identity of shared concerns, solidarity, strength, harmonious co-existence, inter-dependence, life giving and inseparability.

#### The divine weaver

'There is no place where you are not,  
O God for all that is.

You create out of nothingness  
as you did when time began.

You imagine new ways before our knowing,  
moving on within our being  
and weaving life in the face of death.'<sup>1</sup>

God, who created male and female in his own image and likeness (Genesis 1:27) and breathed the breath of

life (Genesis 2:7), who identified us while we were still in the womb (Isaiah 49:1), is the Divine Weaver who prepares us through the Spirit and Fire to come together to restore the principles of harmony and just co-existence so skilfully interwoven in His masterpiece of creation.

Restoration of the principles means ushering in God's kingdom on earth where peace, justice, dignity, equality, empathy and concern will prevail. Where people will not be divided into the majority on the fringes, while the minority rides piggy back. A new world community of social justice which holds hope and meaning in life for the marginalised millions. Restoration means turning the present world upside down (Acts 17:6). This then is the heart of contextual mission.

#### South Asian context

The South Asian countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have made vast technological advancement in almost all spheres of human activity in the recent past. From developing super computers, to market manufacture of sophisticated equipment of destruction, nuclear weapons, launching of satellites, mass communication networks; green, blue and white revolutions and reaching near self-sufficiency in food production to name a few, South Asian countries can be said to have matched strides with the so-called developed countries.

All the South Asian Countries are democratic nations, some having seen its dawn recently from dictatorship or monarchy.

All South Asian countries have adequate, if not vast, natural and human resources.

The rosy picture of advancement is but one side of a glorified interpretation of tall claims. The stark ground reality is, however, diametrically opposite since, despite the achievement, there has been no improvement in the quality of life for the majority.

<sup>1</sup> Revd Dorothy McRae-McMahon in the Mission Prayer Handbook 1993 published by the Assembly Commission for Mission and the Uniting Church of Australia.



The one fact which stands out as strikingly common among South Asian countries, is the impoverishment of the masses. Advancements have but resulted in further increasing the gap between the rich and the powerful on one hand, and the poor and powerless on the other, due to skewed development policies and practices.

### India specific scenario

No discussion on the Indian scenario can be complete without discussing the caste, or rather the outcaste, system. The untouchables, who have deliberately preferred to call themselves *dalits* until they are truly liberated, are outside of the four-fold caste system and hence the term outcastes. Or is it the dalits who have cast out the inhuman caste system?

Although a crime, untouchability is still in vogue in parts of India with dalits denied temple entry prevented from drawing water from public sources, prohibited from wearing chappals in the main villages, and forced to drink in separate tea cups in small restaurants.

Dalits, along with the tribals, are considered to be profane. They are the pounded, the crushed, the battered, the debased, and the broken in society.

Unfortunately, among the dalits and tribals (except those following the matrilineal system, and even among the so-called 'caste' people, women are ascribed an inferior status and treated as non-entities.

### The emerging reality

The continuing and increasing dehumanization and impoverishment of the majority as a result of unjust socio-economic and politico-cultural systems which benefit only the minority who form about 10% of the population, are but affirmations of the sickness of South Asian countries.

Ironically, governments, instead of striking at the root cause of injustice, and promoting an egalitarian society, look towards international monetary agencies as the saviours of economic development who will, naturally, demand their pound of flesh in the form of privatisation, patents, de-regulation, and devaluation. Even if economic development does take place as believed, the answer to who will really benefit is pretty obvious. Time has repeatedly proved that the trickle down theory is but a farce.

The marginalised, and among them especially women, will continue to be the worst sufferers of lob sided economic development philosophy.

The saddest part is that the dehumanized have internalised clinical indoctrination and economic development myths to such an extent that they have become passive, numb and voiceless.

It is a wonder as to how these 'wretched of the earth' manage to subsist confined to a space which holds no meaning or hope for existence.

Marginalisation of the majority and dominance by the minority could surely not have been part of God's eternal plan for humankind.

As Julius Nyerere, in his address to the Mary Knoll Sisters, rightly said 'The present condition of man (and woman — brackets mine) must be unacceptable to all who think of an individual person as a unique creation of a living God. We say man (and woman) was created in the image of God. I refuse to imagine a God who is poor, ignorant, superstitious, fearful, oppressed, wretched — which is the lot of the majority of those He created in His own image. Men (and women) are creators of themselves and their condition. We are creatures, not of God, but our fellow men (and women).'

### Soul searching

Let us do some soul searching as to how most of us have typically responded to the hard reality of hopelessness, vacuum and fatalism which is the plight of the majority of our fellow human beings.

We have closeted Christ in the confines of a building and relegated him to a subjective experience. Instead of going out into the world we have remained static within our small circle of assumed religiosity.

We have mostly portrayed Christ as being meek, all forgiving, loving, full of grace and listening to prayers. We have conveniently refused to comprehend the fullness of Christ's mission on earth 'to save that which was lost' (Matthew 18:11). We are afraid of visualising an angry Christ cracking the whip on those trading in the temple (Matthew 21:12-13). We are embarrassed to accept the revolutionary Christ when he asked a 'low caste' Samaritan woman for water (John 4:1-25). We fail to perceive the Christ who unmasked hypocrisy and ritualistic priesthood when he compared the Sadducees and Pharisees to 'whited sepulchers' and 'clean tea cups' (Matthew 23:25-28).

True, we have prayed for the poor and needy and even provided some charity. But, disturbingly, are not most of us guilty of bordering on sadism for having thanked God for what we are and have in comparison to the starving, naked, and homeless millions?

### Scriptural guidelines

The holy Scripture provides us with clear insights as to how we can be meaningfully involved in weaving a new community of hope.

#### 1. The mission of Christ

The mission of Christ is fully explained in the Nazareth manifesto: 'The spirit of the Lord is upon me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people.' (Luke 4:18-19) Good news to the poor means enabling them to improve their quality of life; captives are those



in various kinds of social, economic, political and cultural bondage; oppressed are those who have been denied the space to become full human beings; and the time for us to act is now.

## 2. *The mission strategy*

Matthew 25:31-46 speaks of the final judgement when the Son of Man will sit on his holy throne to judge the people of all nations who will be gathered around him. He will separate the righteous from those 'under God's curse' as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. To those on the right he will say 'I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink; I was a stranger and you received me in your homes, naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you too care of me, in prison and you visited me.' To those on the left the judgement will be 'whenever you refused to help one of those least important ones, you refused to help me.' Do we see Christ in the suffering, the persecuted and the victimised? On which side are we — right or left?

## Call to action

For enabling the marginalised who are worried about now and today to weave themselves into a community of hope and to find meaning in their life, then it is essential that we, who are part of the South Asian Youth in Mission Workcamp, understand the framework of the totality of Christ's mission and be prepared to be woven ourselves.

### 1. *Mission means new spirituality*

From Genesis to Revelation, the Common thread running through the Holy Bible is the God of justice taking the side of the poor and oppressed. The climax is undoubtedly the line and mission of Christ who became flesh, dwelt among us and emptied himself for the redemption of humanity.

Christ, in fact, revolutionised the world with His compassion, selfless love, association with sinners and commoners, challenged authority, demanded justice, brought peace, and made the supreme sacrifice of being nailed for the cause of truth.

However, instead of understanding the fullness of the mission of Christ, most often we pick on passages, incidents and teachings in the Bible which we consider convenient and non-controversial. We tend to dilute or overlook those that are challenging, radical and call for commitment to sacrificial service. We mostly proclaim the passive and underplay the pervasive for fear of being branded non-evangelical and non-spiritual.

A new spirituality is an objective, contextual and holistic understanding of the Episcopal and social dimensions of the holy Scriptures with its centrality on redemption of humanity through the centuries.

Emphasising the spiritual aspects along, while excluding the dynamic nature of the social gospel is indicative of a biased spirituality.

### 2. *Mission is sacrificial love in action*

We are 'professors' rather than practitioners. Mission is not preaching but practising the good news.

James 2:22-25 asks us not to deceive ourselves by just listening to his word, but instead put it into practise. The passage goes on to say that whoever looks closely into the perfect law that sets people free and puts it into practise will be blessed by God in what they do.

The mission of sacrificial love in action demands moving away from religious conservativeness and inertia, daring to practice the model of Christ the liberator, who had a preferential option for the poor even unto death.

Being a religious minority does not matter if we truly believe that we are the salt (Matthew 5:13) and leaven (Matthew 13:33) with a prophetic role of transforming the world. Are we prepared to walk the extra mile? (Matthew 5:41)

### 3. *Mission is sharing life*

While we should be thankful to God for what he has meant and continues to mean to us, let us think of the faceless masses.

Our Father Almighty sent his only begotten son to the world as the ultimate act of sharing life. Christ himself shared his all so that we may be redeemed and live with hope and joy.

Sharing life pre-supposes sharing our blessings, our riches, resources and all that we value in life with no hidden agenda of expecting returns. Sharing life is breaking free of the chains of possessiveness and sharing our all to form an egalitarian community, as done in the early Church.

Sharing of life is not an option but a pre-requisite to prove our concern and sincerely following the footsteps of our servant Lord who 'though he was rich, yet for our sake became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich' (2 Corinthians 8:9).

### 4. *Mission is ecumenism*

No other religion in the world is as divided Christianity today. Ironically, all the intrafactions accept the Lordship of Christ Jesus and share a common creed of salvation, judgement and eternal life. Why then the artificial division and on what basis?

Christ came to the world for the redemption of the whole humanity and not for any particular denomination. Christ is the unifying force, the last common denominator who binds us together in love and purpose against the backdrop of a world torn asunder by factionalism.

As Christians, we need to be primarily woven together by developing the right attitude for togetherness, which cuts across, denominational,



regional and national barriers. Let us first be united as a community of hope. Otherwise we have no moral right to even think of facilitating the weaving of others.

Starting with the coming together of Christians living in a neighborhood, the movement should encompass regions and countries and lead to the birth of the global church committed to the cause of humanisation.

#### 5. *Mission is partnership*

The main reasons for the poverty and powerlessness being on the increase among the already deprived are psychological barriers and being kept unorganised.

Those who silently suffer, as a result of ruthless exploitation and mindless selfishness by the minority who make sure that structural injustices keep working overtime, tend to be withdrawn, develop defence mechanisms, lack of self confidence, have low or no feelings of self worth, develop a mind set of servitude, are fatalistic and lack of hope.

Our primary role, therefore is enabling the downtrodden, as their equals, to become free of their psychological imprisonment which has been nurtured through a multiplicity of casual factors and to assist them to become rational and develop self respect. The unorganised can then be assisted in weaving themselves together as one community of hope with a shared vision and the determination to break strangleholds which perpetuate dehumanisation.

Mission in partnership means by being committed to this cause of facilitating empowerment of the masses, weaving ourselves with their struggles, pains and perspectives. In solidarity with them, we should be animators and activists striving alongside the majority who have in them the potential to think, decide and act for themselves to transform their life of gloom into one of hope and meaning. If only we are of meaningful assistance to them, they can, as creative subjects, rewrite their history of bondage.

If we believe in the commandments of love — love God and love your neighbour as yourself — come let us translate them into action in partnership with the least in society. No acting as Godparents please as this will lead to their becoming dependent on us and add further insult to their already wounded selfhood.

#### 6. *Mission is contextualisation of the Gospel*

Contextualisation of the good news in enabling the victimized to understand the Gospel from the perspective of their life experiences.

Romanticising the good news to mean being saved now to enjoy eternal life after death is an abstraction simplification of the challenging and contextual ministry of Jesus. The poor should be enabled to believe in a life before death.

Good news in action is realistically responding to people in need, just as Christ showed the way. He preached, he healed, he questioned, he shared according to the needs of people who interacted with him.

Just imagine the plight of the half dead person if the good Samaritan had not responded to the crisis situation in practical terms and taken care of him.

Let us for a moment reflect on what contextualisation of the Gospel would mean to the poor, starving and hopeless millions denied their basic right for a living. What would contextualisation of the Gospel mean to women subjected to gender injustices as a result of patriarchal system?

And Jesus said 'Go and do thou likewise' (Luke 10:37).

### Conclusion

At a time when we as Christians find ourselves in between two great historical events, the Incarnation and Lent, which portray humility, intense love, sacrifice and victory, let us understand the purpose of Christ's coming to earth and the fullness of his mission.

Let us resolve to act in accordance with the holistic Gospel and be committed to the cause of facilitating the weaving of the lost and the last among humanity into a community of hope to realise social justice, dignity and liberty on their own terms.

Let the spirit of the Lord dwell in us and strengthen us as we take up this great challenge of mission to live as Christ.

'Remind us yet again of the vision,  
the dream of a world where people live  
in Holy Communion,  
sharing the bread of life,  
united in their common brokenness.

Remind us yet again  
that the feast is for all,  
rich in graces beyond all our imaginings.  
Remind us now that we are not our own,  
called forth to search for the little ones  
and bring the theme again,  
sent forth to call down the mighty ones  
and free them for eternal life.

Remind us yet again, O holy God.<sup>2</sup>

DR. J. RICHARD DEVAOSS

<sup>2</sup> Revd. Dorothy McRae-McMahon in the Mission Prayer Handbook 1993 published by the Assembly Commission for Mission and the Uniting Church of Australia.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. J Richard Devadoss is Assistant Director for the Church of South India's Council for Technical and Vocational Training in Madras.



# The Maniakaranpatti Experience

## The South Asia Youth Camp

---

Maniakaranpatti is a remote village near Andipatti which is about 60 kilometres away from Madurai. Almost all people are poor, living upon daily wages. The other source of income is the nearby forest. They go to the forest, cut the wood freely and sell it to the neighboring towns — knowing it is wrong to do so. A Primary School was started by the CSI Madurai-Ramnad diocese for the 150 families in the village. A hundred year old church is there which was constructed by the American Missionaries, given to the CSI later on. Pastor comes every Sunday from Andipatti. This tiny village was chosen as the work site for the South Asia Youth Camp jointly organised by the Council for World Mission, London, and the Church of South India, through the diocese of Madurai-Ramnad.

The Youth Camp which was inaugurated on 5th February at the newly built community college has had its base at Madurai and after a week's orientation, moved to Maniakaranpatti with the new spirit instilled by Dr. B. Prashantham of the Christian Counselling Centre Vellore. Of course, the 30 strong band of youth, men and women, were stationed at the scenic beauty of the Vaigai dam, ten kilometers away from the worksite.

When the curtain was raised on Maniakaranpatti the scene that appeared was that the village had lost many houses in the recent worst hit cyclone. The youth, with full of vigour and enthusiasm appeared on the scene with crow-bars, spades and shovels with a mission to build ten houses for the poor of the village. The technical assistance and the material like bricks and roofs were supplied by the CSI-CTVT. Dr. Jeyapaulan the Director, CTVT, bestowed personal attention and paid a visit. But the suspicion that was lurking in the hearts of the people was whether the youth who were looking more a splendid colourful team rather than the work team would do any good at all. Indeed the team was colorful, two from Netherlands, one from Korea, one from Jamaica, one from South Africa, one from France, one from Samoa, seven from Bangladesh, five from Shillong area, two from North India and the rest from the South. Will they go hand in hand to do the herculean job in just a week (from 13th to 19th February) was a big question in their minds.

Bishop Pothirajulu (Madurai-diocese) who was a sweated-labourer himself for two days, gave ultimatum that at least a half dozen houses should be ready for the

dedication on the last day. Rev. Roderick Hewitt (Secretary, CWM, London) who was present on the spot had to gird up his loins, tie a turban and had to bend down to break the ground, so did the team! Well, the miracle had happened! the houses were completed and have been dedicated by Rev. Dr. Arun Gopal, the Secretary of the Camp (Director, Dept. of Christian Education, Synod), Rev. Dr. Michael George, Director, COLT, and Rev. Dass Babu, the Director, CSI Communications, who was also there with his Video crew.

That was the most delightful week for the villagers. Not only were the houses built but they had also enjoyed the fellowship with the people from various countries. They had never seen either blacks or whites before! Every day, during morning worship, the singing in different languages and prayers brought them closer. Agape, the Fellowship meal, with all the villagers, about 1500, was the climax. It was a big meal and was sumptuously fed. What a joy it was to share a meal with the poor who might have had such a feast for the first time. It was Roderick's idea, readily accepted by the Bishop and the organisers did a marvellous job.

Rev. Roderick commenting on the camp mentioned that it had the VELCOM (Vision for Equipping Local Congregations in Mission) tenets put into practice. The youth who gathered for the camp formed into a 'Local congregation' and during the first week of their stay at Madurai, they set the Agenda and Analysed the situation. The Second week provided them the opportunity to plunge into action. They shared their time, talent and resources with the needy. By praying and worshipping together with the villagers they completed the VELCOM cycle. By equipping the local congregation at Maniakaranpatti, the youth equipped themselves at the same time learning by doing.

Many went with a resolute mind to implement VELCOM in their Churches and organise such youth camps in their areas. There was also a discernable change in the attitude of the participants. Some of them who never opened their mouths, very reserved, but in the end they were able to mingle freely with the other participants.

— Dass Babu



# Mission in Pluralistic Society

BY BISHOP MONDAL — DHAKA, Bangladesh

His Holiness the Pope visited Bangladesh in 1989 for a day. He usually kisses the earth on arrival and greets the people of the country according to their own custom in the country's language. The pope kissed on arrival the Bangladesh soil but raised his right hand in greeting — he had no other words in his mouth and no other gesture, not even folding of his hands. The followers of main religions have their own greetings, 'Salam-Namaskar. It is a pluralistic society — we had a try at Secularism from 1971-75, now Islam is a state religion — but the country still is a People's Republic — a kind of secular democracy so far all religions have the right to exist and equal before law. However the religions have played a divisive effect on the nation and most political parties control their votes of showing India as a Brahmin dominated, anti-Islamic country to be shunned and feared in case it gets engulfed. Of course there are forces that constantly counter these challenges — but a country with over 75% of illiteracy and exploitation of simple faith of the people by conservative Islamic teachers do not help much free thinking and breaking down of prejudices and help overcome old suspicions derived from the exploitation of a majority of Muslims by Hindus during the days of the British Raj and occasionally additional or internationally Palestinian course or the Gulf War. Christians are one third of one percent of the population but may have more opportunity to live and work and enjoy freedom they like in India than what has been enjoyed by religious minorities in the so-called secular countries of the West.

We have heard three lessons from the Bible and I hope we remember something of the lessons. John Carden in his collection of prayers and reflections — 'Morning, Noon and Evening' describes an incident in Thailand where Buddhists and Christians were going to read each others scriptures — and the turn came for the Christians. The Christians naturally picked up St. John's Gospel and started reading from the beginning of the first Chapter. 'In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God'. Some Buddhists immediately reacted. O my, we understand why you are so full of words in your religion and from the beginning you have been the same way. Others outside of our faith may see our worship some kind of a drill — time fixed, order of services set, we sing, read, preach and the drill complete — we march out like onward Christian soldiers. May be

in other traditions like Hindus and Buddhists worship — that are more closer to our existence — may not have a set pattern — a beginning and a set end — a darshan (show up with God) and a lot of quiet and reflection. Archbishop George Carey in his book 'Sharing a Vision, comments that how much he envies the Jewish families where faith and devotion has been preserved from time immemorial. One can trace the same ethos in some traditional Hindu and Muslim families — we might have fallen short of this and left the religion and our Bibles and prayer books in the Churches as if they are not relevant for our day to day living. As a Church leader in Bangladesh I find great famine of God's words among the Christians. We do not know our Bible in the depth of our being — nor the way the word be incarnated in our times. We have failed to inculcate Christian spirituality and values in our personal lives as in our relationships in families and among Christians and communities around us. We only talk of preaching to others — that what Western people want to hear from us — but we often fail to live up to what we profess.

I am sure you have been able to overcome this disease — that knowing mere words and knowing Jesus Christ personally can be different matters.

'That which was from the beginning which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life — the life was made manifest and we saw it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us' — 1 John 1.1:2, And they recognised that they (disciples) were with Jesus — Acts.

We are going to look at the Gospel for today, Luke 10, a few verses — Jesus sending out of 70 disciples — we may feel a bit more comfortable with this group — they are not the specially selected ones the twelve. In the 9th Chapter of St. Luke's Gospel we hear about the 12 being sent and they ended up quarrelling among themselves as to who was the greatest of the lot. But Jesus was not to be discouraged by this so he called upon more ordinary of his followers.

Call — If I ask, have you received a call and been appointed some are quite comfortable with this kind of question — some may have changed their entire life-style at a point of time, many others may say at my Baptism



and Confirmation I have accepted the call. Two days ago we witnessed some beautiful dancing. At the end there were eight kinds of drums — and each dancer understood the language of her drum — and interpreted it in gestures and postures and rhythms and many of us did not understand the language and we were told that they have attuned/immersed themselves in the language of music for a very long time. Jesus also calls each one of us — every moment — every day — in the midst of our lives — wherever we may be — and demands a response — do I and you hear Him call — is my life and yours being attuned to His call, the rhythm and the sect of his music? In the present civilisation there are many other calls all kinds of tunes and playing, many claims made on our lives — even Bishops, Presbyters, church leaders and ordinary laity in the pew are busy. We often call it a rat race and we have a God who still calls and searches in this in order to share His loving plans for each one of us to join in the harvest. So we need to be with Him adequately that he will teach us the heavenly dance to His music and He said to them 'Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest a while. Jesus needed 40 days and 40 nights at the beginning of his ministry and many early mornings and entire nights — how much more quiet and silence and listening is required of us.

Be still, I am God — that is lasting. (V.I.b) *Sent them* or commissioned them for a task. What was the task — to declare that the Kingdom of God has come near to you 'Through words and actions to initiate the Kingdom. To tell a beggar of a generous giver will not be convincing if the speaker can not show the evidence in his/her begging bowl.

Verse 2 speaks of a plentiful harvest and the harvest is interpreted in terms of wholeness v.9 Like the Old Testament lesson Isa. 65:17 onwards that speaks of a new earth and new heaven, where infant morality and premature death will go away adequate housing, good agriculture, and enough for all will be ensured.

This reminds us also of Ps. 144 where God's lordship brings prosperity for individual, family and the community — good for all. And Christianity does not propagate only a life after death but a fullness of life here on earth, as we pray always 'Your kingdom come on earth as in heaven' Even at the present moment of time we are aware that how much sorrow and suffering is caused because much of the world live in defiance of God's loving call in greed and possessiveness — and many countries of the West whom we are proud to call Christians are often the cause of much suffering because of unjust structures in trade, commerce etc. However we cannot be content to blame others only but as we ourselves come nearer God in repentance we will diagnose our own faults and failures and we can with two and two — God as our companion and I, and through His grace — shall be used to work wonders with Him. In our own community living-sharing our lives with others I realized when I saw those girls

without the glow of the lights that they were not as beautiful like angels — but rather very ordinary. We the ordinary ones through grace and power be the reflecting the wonderful splendour that is in the face of Jesus Christ in our own lives.

V.2 Labourers are a few. There is always a chance of rejection of the call in the kingdom by the labourers. There is possibility of needlessness. Many are called but few are accepted. They be like my son and daughter who do not understand agriculture.

Jesus was getting a very high cost for his discipleship. Mark Tully the B.B.C. Chief Correspondent in Delhi for many years tells in his book 'No fullstops in India' — about a very recent Kumbha Mela in 1989 at Allahabad, at the meeting place of the Ganges and Jamuna where he found so many Sadhus of all sorts — for some of them life was very very austere and harsh — and in this country the 5 margas or five stages in life had its own claims — even education was something of a very austere nature — and if we interpret brahmachariya (discipleship stage) in our theological programmes, it will be very very challenging for us Bishops or teachers of the faith and the students. I have personal knowledge of a few highly educated and established people in life among Hindus & Muslim community — their discipleship has been quite costly and continue to be so. Many Christians in my country come from poor social background and the discipleship means what I can get from this church? When one gets better of often become quite casual as if the mammon has become the God. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said something like this in his book, 'The cost of Discipleship' that Christ calls a man and a woman to come, and to die so that they may become all His, and be used for his services through His grace.

I end with a Tagore story. A man had almost everything that was required in life — but he needed a bit more to do everything more honorably. So he prays to God and God shows him in a dream to go to the banks of Jamuna and ask a gift from a sadhu whom he saw in the dream. He undertakes a long and difficult journey and comes to the banks of the Jamuna. He discovered the Sadhu after much trouble and asks him — 'Father give me some gift so that I can become fully happy' The Sadhu replied 'I have given up on the world — what can I offer you for your happiness. He remembered later that he found a touch-stone years ago and buried it in the sand near so and so tree and bade him to take it and be happy. The man dug up the touchstone in great excitement and with it he touched all metal things that he had and they turned into a gold. He was overwhelmed with joy. He sat in the sand by the bank of the river for a long time as if in a trance — and threw the touch stone into the river and fell at the Sadhu's feet crying Father, give me the wealth for which you could forget even the precious touch-stone.



# NEWS FROM THE DIOCESES

## MADURAI — RAMNAD

### Issues and Development of Youth Work Among Urban and Rural Situation in Diocese of Madurai and Ramnad

REV. P. JEYACHANDRAN *Director Youth Work, D.M.R.*

The Ministry among young in Madurai-Ramnad Diocese may be classified into two categories:

- 1) The Rural Christian Youth.
- 2) The Urban Christian Youth.

To present the Gospel to these young men and women the diocese has its educational institutions both in Rural and Urban settings.

#### I. Ministry among students:

In Madurai City the Diocese has its colleges, one for women namely Lady Doak College and another for men that is American College. Diocesan Youth activities linked to these colleges for conducting Bible Clubs, Study groups, Prayer groups by joining hands with SCM, YMCA, YWCA and YFC.

In Madurai itself we have two Boys Higher Secondary Schools and 5 higher secondary and high school for girls which run effectively. To minister students of these schools the Diocese is engaging voluntary youth workers and they visit schools regularly. I just have given a few examples of how the ministry among students carried out in Madurai City alone. This same practice carried out in all our institutions.

#### II. Youth work and churches:

The present Madurai-Ramnad Diocese is divided into 11 councils, under each council there are 6-12 pastorates linked. We have 78 pastorates and more than 1200 worship centres in villages. Out of 78 pastorates we have only 15 churches centred in towns and rest come under 'Rural Settings'. To meet all young people we have voluntary youth workers. In a church the youth Secretary is assigned to carryout ministry.

#### III. Regular programmes:

1. Once in a year Diocesan/Annual Youth Conference is convened.
2. Church youth fellowship groups meet regularly and observe youth Sunday.

3. Council level youth Retreat/Seminars/Rallys periodically organised in 11 councils.
4. Youth carol service in different centres/Ecumenical youth carol service arranged jointly every year in different centres.
5. Mission to indigenous (Palliar Hill Tribe) people in Watrap area.
6. Rural Church construction and work camps.

#### IV. The word 'youth' in a wider spectrum:

Youth in Indian context we need to understand from a multi Religious dimension. They grow in a situation of 'Inter Religious Context'. Christian Community in India is considered as the one delinked youth from churches. Their practices are infectious to healthy Christian living.

#### VI. Influence by global culture:

We need to understand that women and youth in India mainly are influenced by the Culture which is nothing but the cinema world. In films people get identification and subjected to self-exposure of thinking. In India the places of talents and art expression are the places of religious centres and festivals. But in Christianity we have failed to see this serious problem, and never do any creative work in worship and art. In rural Hindu festivals it is clearly understood that in every step culturally balanced religious expression knowingly or unknowingly are put together.

#### VII. Innovation and future plans:

1. Setting up a communication centre for youth
  - Which will serve to tap the talents of youth.
  - To produce Video and Audio Cassettes by the Youth and for the Youth of future church.
  - To produce models: Worship in Indian art forms, Sermon presentation, story telling, Christian education Aids, Devotional songs, awareness kit brings out Social Cultural problems.
2. Constructing 25 village churches before 1995.
3. To appoint 11 full time youth workers before 1995, for intensive ministry among youth.
4. Publishing a monthly youth magazine and information services.



5. Setting up one youth Retreat centre to accommodate 200 people either in hill/in sea side of our Diocese.

6. Exchange programmes of youth workers.

## SOUTH KERALA

### Integrated Human Development Programme Among Dalits in South Kerala

To liberate the Dalits from their bondage, the South Kerala Diocese under the Leadership of its Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Sam Amirtham has launched a programme namely Integrated Human Development Programme Among Dalits in South Kerala. Out of his theological conviction and experience the Bishop has planned the programme together with the Dalit leaders which will affect and improve almost all areas of the lives of the Dalits in the Diocese.

To implement the programme as people's movement at the grassroot level, about 200 units at the congregational level have been formed. Each group will have meeting in a month. And they discuss Indian situation, poverty analysis, land structure, family size, family problems, social problems of development, community organisation, and dynamics of group action etc. The ultimate goal is to attain self-reliance and restore the self-dignity of the participants in the process of development struggles and to build up and recommend their joint thinking and action<sup>1</sup>

On the 29th January, a Diocesan level meeting was held at the LMS Compound, Trivandrum to which representatives of the base level units were invited. Nearly 950 people attended the meeting. While inaugurating the meeting, The Rt. Rev. Dr. Samuel Amirtham, Bishop in South Kerala Diocese said: 'The Christian Dalits are expected to work for the liberation of all Dalits in India. All the National, Regional and local Dalits groups should come under a common banner, so that the joint struggle will be strengthened. The non-Dalit Christians should also feel it is their primary duty to voice the cry of the voiceless'. Rev. Dr. James Massey, General Secretary, Dalit Solidarity Programme was the main speaker. Dr. James Massey was of the opinion that if all the major churches are willing to fight for and with the Dalits their fundamental rights can be restored in our secular democratic society soon. The Dalits must become aware of two facts (1) They are part of an undivided society based upon a divinely established principle of equality (2) their assigned inferior status is neither of their own creation nor a divinely created reality. We also need to struggle to reestablish the quality life of the Christian Dalits. The Christian Dalits who represent more than 75% of the Christians in India do not enjoy basic human rights and constitutional protection. Rev. J. Yesudasan is the Director of the Integrated Human Development Programme Among the Dalits in South Kerala Diocese giving unique leadership

among his people. The time has come that this part of the Indian Churches where the Dalits struggle is understood as a struggle for justice and as such is part of the kingdom movement initiated by Jesus Christ.

*Rev. David Joy*

*Holy Trinity Church, Trivandrum.*

### Henry Lefever's visit: A Passage to India 1994

'We do hope you will be able to make the long journey here as the Seminary's first principal' wrote the Rev. Dr. J. W. Gladstone, the present Principal of Kerala United Theological Seminary, Trivandrum, South India.

I boarded the Air India flight from London Heathrow to Trivandrum via Bombay on 31st January and was met at the Trivandrum International Airport. Then there was the short drive to the Seminary. That was my first experience of the India 'population explosion'. How we made the journey without colliding with the masses of people in the road, to say nothing of stray animals, bullock carts and motor vehicles, was a great and mighty wonder.

A still greater wonder was the Seminary itself. I had left it in 1946 with classrooms which had earlier been used as a carpentry school with a plain dormitory at the rear. In place of my old bungalow stood a handsome chapel. The sides of the hill were occupied by a new academic block, dedicated at the start of the celebrations, decent staff houses and a new men's hostel for which I unveiled the foundation stone during my visit.

The Seminary is a union of a number of earlier theological institutions, the Cambridge Nicholson Institution (Anglican), the Union School of Divinity (Congregational), the Mar Thoma Theological Seminary and the Malayam-speaking Churches of northern Kerala founded by the Basel Mission (Presbyterian).

The Senate meetings began with theological papers and discussions, focussing on the need for the Church in India to be truly indigenous, both in organisation and doctrine. One member of the Senate said that the Indian Church was like a coconut — brown outside but white inside! Of course the Gospel must be commended to the people of India in terms which are not wholly alien to their indigenous culture, but the Gospel transcends all cultures, those of the West no less than those of the East. Members spoke of the 'hidden Christ' and used the Indian theologian, M.M. Thomas' expression, the 'acknowledged Christ' of Hinduism, but Christ transcends Hinduism just as he does our forms of Christianity. The line of thought expressed by some of the members could lead to a watering down of the uniqueness of the Gospel.

After the theological debates came the Convocation meetings with 500 people seated in a 'pandal', a temporary erection of bamboo and palm leaf thatch, between the old teaching block and the old hostel. After the Convocation address on the western missionary movement and the Asian response to it today, an impressive degree ceremony



took place — honorary DDs for four eminent Christian theologians, including a mighty Indian lady who was not only a pioneer of the Christian 'Ashram' (religious community) movement but a vigorous champion of the place of women in the Church.

I was moved by the many Senators who told me how much they had valued and used my textbook on the History of the Reformation, one of the earliest contributions

to the Christian Students' Library, the purpose of which was to produce, not works of great erudition or literary merit but clear and concise treatments of their subjects, particularly related to the needs of the Indian Church.

It was a great experience, one that I am not likely to repeat but which I am profoundly grateful to have had.

## SERAMPORE COLLEGE

Serampore, West Bengal - 712 201

Serampore College invites applications to fill the following vacancies in the Theology Department:

- (i) Professor of Church History
- (ii) Professor of Tribal Studies

### *Expected Qualifications :*

A doctoral degree of Serampore College or its recognised equivalent in the respective/related branch with at least ten years of teaching at B.D. level including at least five years of teaching at post-graduate level and having published research work.

Candidates with Master's degree of Serampore or its equivalent with teaching and ministerial experience with ability and willingness to plan and initiate new programmes of study and research may also apply.

*Salary Scale : Professor :* Rs. 3300-150-3900-175-4600

*Asst. Professor :* Rs. 2800-125-3300-150-3900

plus medical, children, holiday allowances and partially furnished free accommodation in the College are provided as per College rules.

*Applications must reach the Principal, Serampore College, Serampore, W.B. 712 201 not later than 15 September, 1994.*

## DALIT SCHOLARSHIPS

A few scholarships to help deserving students who undergo professional or other degree/diploma courses throughout their period of study are available with the Synod.

**Applications may be sent to the**

**General Secretary,  
CSI Synod, No. 5 Whites Road,  
Royapettah,  
Madras - 600 014.**

*With the recommendation of the concerned diocese.*



# Christians must co-exist with other religions, Chinese told

BY EDMUND DOOGUE

Christians were likely to remain a small minority in Asia, and Christianity needed to come to terms with the prospect of existing alongside other Asian religions, the World Council of Churches' General Secretary, Konrad Raiser, told seminary students in Nanjing, China, on 10 May, during a visit to churches and church institutions in China.

Christians, Raiser said, needed, in the light of this religious plurality, to ask themselves what it meant to talk of God's plan for the salvation of humanity. Raiser was speaking of the challenges facing ecumenism to 150 students at the national Protestant seminary in Nanjing, the biggest of China's 13 Protestant seminaries.

Raiser said that while there was certainly a new sense of the global unity of humanity, 'at the same time we are witnessing a growing affirmation of cultural identity'. This was also true within the churches, where new forms of church life were growing out of specific cultural heritages.

'Now we are discovering that these diversities are a source of richness from which the church universal draws its vitality.'

Raiser said 'the task of ecumenical theology is to provide the people of God with the language we need to communicate with one another while respecting our diversities'.

Speaking of an even larger challenge facing the ecumenical movement as the 21st century approaches, Raiser gave a universal vision of the goals of ecumenism.

Pointing out that within the last generation, the Western notion of progress had been modified by the 'realization that there are limits to what human beings can do and must do in terms of transforming the environment', Raiser said that it was evident that progress was sustainable only if the life of the entire creation was respected.

'We have to overcome the tendency to see everything in terms of the human condition', he said, adding that in

the biblical story of creation woman and man were not the end of the process — animals were created on the same day, while the final day of creation was a day of rest — 'the Sabbath that restores the wholeness of creation'.

Raiser said that a newly articulated vision of ecumenism should thus include not only the churches, and not only humanity, but the whole of creation. Our Christian hope should not be directed merely to the salvation of our souls but go beyond the Christian community to a 'new heaven and earth'.

He added 'even if one day we restored the unity of the church, we could not have reached the goal of ecumenism', a goal that would be realized only when everything was brought together and reconciled in communion with God.

In specific terms, Raiser said, the goal for ecumenism was to set the churches free to embrace this comprehensive vision, rather than close in on themselves.

Asked by one of the Nanjing students about the conflict between Christianity and local culture, Raiser replied: 'To a certain extent, there always is a conflict. Christianity does not belong to any culture, but wherever it takes root it enters into contact with the local culture, also with the local religious culture. That in Jesus Christ God became human also means that in Jesus Christ God becomes part of our culture.'

Raiser said that in every culture there were elements that limited people from being fully human.

'This is particularly true of the way women have been treated in most of our traditional cultures, so in that sense the Gospel is a means to transform our culture, allowing us to become fully human.'

But Raiser stressed that when he spoke of 'transforming culture' he did not mean the methods of the early missionaries who called on new Christians to separate themselves from their traditional culture as proof of their commitment to Christianity.



'There is no such thing as a specific Christian culture. There is only Chinese Christianity, Indian Christianity ... We are called out of our culture (by the Gospel) and placed firmly within our culture.'

Raiser said that the relationship between gospel and culture was a current theme of study at the WCC and a fuller answer to the student's question should eventually be available. (EPS)

### **Churches should protect human rights, says Hong Kong leader**

**HONG KONG** — Martin Lee, chairman of the United Democrats party, the most popular political party in Hong Kong, has urged the World Council of Churches to bring pressure on both British and Beijing authorities for human rights and democracy as Hong Kong approaches the handover to China in 1997.

Lee, whose party holds 11 of the 18 democratically elected seats in Hong Kong's 60-member Legislative Council, urged Konrad Raiser, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC) to press upon Christ Patten, the governor of Hong Kong, the need to set up a human rights commission to ensure the protection of individual rights after the handover. Raiser will meet Patten on 18th May.

Lee, who is a Roman Catholic, also said that the WCC and the Churches would have a role in Hong Kong from 1997 onwards to ensure that human rights, including religious liberty, were protected under the Beijing government.

A frequent critic of Beijing policies, Lee told Raiser that his party supported moves by Patten to make Hong Kong's Legislative Council more democratic before the handover. Legislation is to come to a vote in the council at the end of June to make the council more representative. Lee said the vote would be close, because of the presence of pro-Beijing members in the council, but he thought it could pass with some persuasion from Patten.

Lee was sceptical of the new openness in China, saying that 'communism is the most unpopular thing in China. No one wants it.'

The Communists were allowing economic reform only because they believed that it would allow the citizens of China to get enough to eat, thus reducing resistance against the Chinese authorities, he said.

'Economic reform is the only option open to them', Lee said. 'If they introduced democratic elections, they would be the first to go.'

'They are trying to control a genie in a bottle', Lee said. 'The economic half of the genie is out, but they want to keep the political half in.'

Lee said that Beijing wanted to keep Hong Kong under its control rather than allow democratization. 'If they give freedom to Hong Kong, then the rest of China will want it.'

He claimed that some communist cadres were corrupt, with heavy personal investments by them and their families, including in Hong Kong.

Lee said that Beijing needed Hong Kong's wealth and market power, so that Beijing had much more to lose than the British if the handover process went wrong.

Beijing, Lee said, had promised to dismantle the democratic structures being established by Patten. But he added: 'I don't believe them ... The correct thing for Patten to do is what is right for Hong Kong.' (EPS)

### **Global Warming and Climate Change : Call to Churches**

The following Statement was adopted by the WCC Central Committee at its meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, 20-28 January 1994

- ♣ The 1990 World Council of Churches Convocation on Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation in Seoul, Korea, called all churches to 'combat the causes of destructive changes to the atmosphere which threaten to disrupt the Earth's climate, and create widespread suffering.' The World Council of Churches reiterates this call because of the gravity of this threat and the relation of climate change to the unjust distribution of wealth, resources, and political power.
- ♣ Human activity has reached the critical point of changing fundamentally the earth's atmosphere and conditions for life on the planet. The continuous and intensive use of fossil fuels has contributed to the greenhouse effect and is accelerating long-term global warming. Further, the protective mantle of ozone around the earth is being depleted due to the emission of destructive gases.
- ♣ While further research is required, the scientific community agrees that action cannot be delayed. The reality of accelerated climate change is not just another sign of environmental disarray. The equilibrium of the earth's ecosystem is severely threatened through the increased use of fossil fuels with a corresponding rise in carbon dioxide emissions.
- ♣ A general increase in the Earth's temperature is likely to result in a rise of sea levels, endangering the life of small island states and many heavily populated coastal regions. The communities and nations of the Pacific face particular dangers. Floods in both the South and the North will probably become more intense; droughts and desertification are predicted to



increase as climate zones change; and a rise in the severity and frequency of storms is also expected. Moreover, many areas most immediately vulnerable to such changes are already suffering from the iniquities of the global economic system, and are unable to undertake major and costly preventive measures.

Although the consequences are global, the causes of this crisis have their origins in particular regions. In striving constantly for more production and consumption, the rich industrialized nations today are the major, although not the only, emitters of greenhouse gases. These activities are threatening God's creation, inflicting grave threats upon the rest of the world and even jeopardizing their own future.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) agreed to a Framework Convention on Climate Change. But it is yet to be ratified, and it lacks specific timetables and clear strategies to implement its goals.

#### **RESPONSE, the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches :**

Underscores that global warming and accelerated climate change are visible signs of the crisis experienced by civilization today, and are rooted in the refusal to accept the boundaries of God's creation;

Recognizes that a radical change can be effected only as a result of true repentance and changed life-styles, where by the rich, abandon the false value orientations of ever increasing consumption;

Understands that the social and environmental degradation caused by accelerated climate change is sin against God and a violation of creation;

Declares that the atmosphere must be protected as an essential and invaluable common good for this and future generations.

#### **THEREFORE WE CALL ALL CHURCHES :**

- ♣ To recognize the challenge to the life and witness of Christians that the crisis from accelerated climate change presents;
- ♣ To reinterpret Christian responsibility towards creation and to respond in faith and action to the peril in their own situation;
- ♣ To rediscover Christian teaching on life-styles of sufficiency in personal lives and institutions;
- ♣ To work in partnership with all peoples of living faiths and traditions, and with governments and non-governmental organisations, in concrete actions to build sustainable societies.

#### **Specifically, we call the Churches of the North:**

- ♣ To protect the atmosphere by reducing their use of energy from non-renewable sources;
- ♣ To limit the use of resources to those required for basic needs, sufficient income and consumption which is sustainable.

#### **Likewise, we call the churches of the South :**

- ♣ To work for new models of sustainable societies built upon economic equity and ecological stability;
- ♣ To promote the participation and empowerment of people in creating these new alternatives.

#### **We call upon the International Community:**

- ♣ To ratify and implement the Framework Convention on Climate Change;
- ♣ To adopt specific timetables and strategies to dramatically reduce total carbon dioxide emissions to achieve the objectives of the Framework Convention.
- ♣ Finally, we draw the attention of churches and the international community to the recently completed WCC study paper, 'Accelerated Climate Change : Sign of Peril, Test of Faith', as a comprehensive resource describing this crisis, exploring its theological implications, and proposing specific responses.

THE REGISTRAR  
UNITED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE  
88, Old No. 17, Miller Road  
Post Box No. 4813  
Bangalore : 560 046



# THE UNITED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE BANGALORE

The united Theological College, Bangalore offers different courses preparing candidates for Pastoral and teaching ministries and Church-related services. We appeal to the Churches and Church-related Institutions to recommend/sponsor committed young men and women to training. Our College offers the following courses for the academic year 1995-96 :

## GRADUATE STUDIES

- |                                             |             |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Bachelor of Divinity Course (B.D) Degree | — 3½ years  |
| 2. Diploma in Proficiency in Counselling    | — 10 months |

## POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

1. Master of Theology Degree of the Senate of Serampore College in : 2 years

OLD TESTAMENT  
NEW TESTAMENT  
CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY  
HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY  
RELIGIONS  
CHRISTIAN ETHICS  
CHRISTIAN MINISTRY —

- (a) Homiletics  
(b) Christian Education  
(c) Counselling  
(d) General M.Th. in Christian Ministry.

- |                                                 |          |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------|
| 2. Postgraduate Research Diploma of the College | — 1 year |
| 3. Research Fellowship (Niles Scholarship)      | — 1 year |
| 4. Special Course for Matured Candidates        | — 1 year |

Applications for the B.D. Degree course should reach the Principal by 31st August, 1994 and Postgraduate studies by 31st October, 1994 and Diploma in Proficiency in Counselling by 15th January, 1995.

Limited scholarships are available for all the courses. Two scholarships are set apart every year for WOMEN. Application forms and Prospectus are available with the Registrar on payment of Rs. 20 (for application forms) plus Rs. 25 (for Prospectus including postage). Kindly address all enquiries to :

**THE REGISTRAR  
UNITED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE**

63, (Old No.17), Miller's Road  
Post Box No. 4613  
Bangalore : 560 046



## C.L.S. RECENT PUBLICATIONS

1. Christian Baptism—A. C. Mathew	Rs. 40.00
2. Laity Formation—D. Pothirajulu	Rs. 40.00
3. For Christ and The Church—Titus Ebenezer	Rs. 36.00
4. Aroma of Christ—M. J. Joseph	Rs. 15.00
5. The Story of Jesus—Alan Rudge	Rs. 15.00
6. The Coward—J. H. Anand	Rs. 22.00
7. Bible and Entomology—W. T. Chellappah	Rs. 50.00
8. Reflections on Indian Christian Theology—V. C. Rajasekaran	Rs. 60.00
9. Conflict in Corinth—Walter J. Hollenweger	Rs. 15.00
10. God's Call—(A Self-Help Bible Study)—G. Reginald	Rs. 22.00
11. William Carey - The Man and His Mission—P. P. Philip	Rs. 35.00
12. Women's Concerns in Asia—Franklyn J. Balasundaram	Rs. 20.00
13. A. J. Appasamy Speaks to the Indian Church	Rs. 40.00
14. God Who Suffers (A Collection of Essays and Poems)	Rs. 30.00

## FORTHCOMING

1. S. Radhakrishnan : A World Philosopher—Ed. CH. Sreenivasa Rao
2. Bharatidasan's House of Darkness—trans. by M. L. Thangappa
3. Pura Naanuuru—P. Jotimattu
4. Toward A Humanist Theology of Religious Harmony—Israel Selvanayagam
5. Sadhu Kochukunju—Mathew Daniel
6. Biblical Plays—O. M. Rao

*For your requirements, please write to :*  
**THE CHRISTIAN LITERATURE SOCIETY**  
 Post Box No. 501, Park Town, Madras-600 003.

*or to its Branches at*  
**Bangalore, Coimbatore, Cochin, Hyderabad, Kodaikanal, Madurai and Trivandrum**



*Grindlays. Such a pleasure!*

**Grindlays Bank**  
Member ANZ Group.



Contract GB.11.89